A SERMON Preach'd before the KING AT WHITE-HALL,

Novemb. 5. 1696.

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Job, Chap. V. Verſ. 12.

He diſappointeth the devices of the crafty, ſo that their hands cannot perform their enterprize.

HE, that is, *God*, of whom we have expreſs mention in the 8*th Verſe of this Chapter, I would ſeek unto God*, ſaith *Eliphaz* to *Job, and unto God would*

I commit my cauſe, and then, having ſpoken very great things of *God* in the 9, 10, *and* 11 *Verſes*, he goeth on to ſet forth his Praiſe, in theſe Words of my Text; *He diſappointeth the devices of the crafty*, &c.

The word, which we here render *crafty*, is us'd in a double ſenſe in Scripture, ſometimes in a good, but moſt commonly in a bad one. In the 12*th Chap. of Prov. v.* 23. and in other places of that Book it is Tranſlated *prudent*: but generally it ſtands to denote ſuch as are *wickedly cunning*; as in the 83*d Pſal. v. the* 3*d*, *They have taken crafty counſel againſt thy People*; *wickedly crafty* no doubt, ſince it was againſt the People of God; and in the ſame ſenſe you may meet with it, in ſeveral other places of Holy Writ. And that this ſenſe, tho' a very bad one, belongs to the *crafty* in my Text, ſeems to me to be very plain from their being repreſented there as Enemies to God, as ſuch whoſe devices he would diſappoint;

point. And, in this opinion I am farther confirm'd by the *Vulgar Latin*, which renders the Word, which we here Translate *crafty*, * *wicked* or *malicious*. * *Maligni*

This then I take to be the meaning of my Text, that, with how much art and subtilty soever wicked Men may lay their plots and ill designs, there is a God, who both can, and frequently doth disappoint and baffle them, make them vain, and of *none effect*. *Psal.* 33. 10.

That God can do this will be deny'd by none who Believe a God, an Omniscient and Omnipotent God; and that he actually doth it, by none that own his Providence; and I hope I speak to such only at present, as do both. I shall not therefore spend any time needlessly, in the proof of a truth, which I look upon here as granted; but immediately proceed to make the best use and improvement I can of it, with respect to the design of our present Meeting.

And,

And, in order to this, I will endeavour, in my following Diſcourſe,

Firſt. To ſhow how, and in what caſes we may reaſonably ſuppoſe the diſappointments of crafty Mens devices to be from God. And from hence,

Secondly. To make you ſenſible, how eminently God's Hand appear'd in thoſe Deliverances of this Nation, from the devices of crafty Men, which we this Day Commemorate. And then

Thirdly and Laſtly, conclude with ſome Practical Inferences from the Whole.

I. *Firſt.* I am to ſhow how, and in what caſes we may reaſonably ſuppoſe the diſappointments of crafty Mens devices to be from God; from him I mean, not as the common effects of his Ordinary Providence, for in this ſenſe all events whatſoever muſt neceſſarily be acknowledg'd to come from him: but as the Extraordinary Effects of his particular and ſpecial Providence, as his own more immediate and proper doing. And here I ſhall not

not inſiſt upon thoſe which are plainly Miraculous, that is, either above or contrary to Nature, becauſe theſe are allow'd on all hands to belong to God; but on ſuch only, as either viſibly are the immediate effects of Natural Cauſes, or at leaſt are capable of being aſcrib'd to them: and being ſo, make it difficult to determine, when they are, or are not the effects of nature, when of nature proceeding in her common courſe, and when of nature, in a more than uſual manner, influenc'd and directed by God. Now though it is abſolutely impoſſible, in ſuch a nice caſe as this, full of perplexity and variety, to lay down ſuch perfect and exact Rules, as ſhall clearly and effectually reach and decide all queſtions about this matter: yet we may certainly go a great way towards it, if we heedfully obſerve theſe which follow.

Firſt then, when a diſappointment ſhall be brought about, in a way, though not miraculous, yet evidently ſtrange, ſurpri-

ſurprizing and unuſual, we ought in reaſon to place this to God's account. Thus, for example, when thoſe very means, by which crafty Men intend to accompliſh their deſigns, ſhall defeat and blaſt them; when thoſe, that are engag'd in a bad cauſe, ſhall all on a ſudden be ſtruck with a panick fear, and forſake the defence of it; when a conſiderable number of Conſpirators, all Men of art and contrivance, ſhall neglect to make proviſion againſt their Diſcovery, in ſome very plain and obvious caſe, and thereby ſpoil their whole Plot; when a man, of notoriouſly lewd and wicked principles, ſhall in an inſtant become ſcrupulous, and think himſelf oblig'd in Conſcience to reveal his ungodly devices, and his accomplices in them, and by ſo doing deſtroy a very hopeful deſign. In theſe and many other ſuch like caſes, of which we want not inſtances in Hiſtory, I dare appeal to any man of ſenſe, whither it is not more agreeable to reaſon to aſcribe ſuch diſappointments

pointments to God: *who doth marvellous things without number: who turneth the way of the wicked upside down: by whom sinners are made afraid, and Hypocrites surpriz'd with fearfulness: who leadeth Counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the Judges fools: and who turneth the heart of Man which way soever he pleaseth* than merely becauſe there is a Simple poſſibility, not a Moral one, of their being the events of natural chance, to force them upon her.

Job 5. 9. *Pſal.* 14. 6. 9. *Iſa.* 33. 14. *Job* 12. 17. *Prov.* 21. 1.

Secondly. The Hand of God is apparently viſible in thoſe Diſappointments, which involve Men either in thoſe very Miſchiefs, which they had prepared for others, or at leaſt in others, for their grievouſneſs and foreneſs not unlike them. As when *Maxentius* not only fail'd of his deſign againſt *Conſtantines* Life, but periſh'd by that very ſame deceitful Bridge, which he had laid for him; as when a parcel of baſe and inhuman Traytours, that Plot and Contrive how

Euſeb. *Eccl. Hiſt. l.* 9. *cap.* 9.

they may take away their Prince's Life, not only are defeated in their Purpoſes, but are brought to a ſcandalous and miſerable end themſelves; This plainly ſeems to be the doing of him, who delights
Jer. 25. 14. to *recompenſe Men according to their deeds*, and to make the Miſchief of the Wicked
Pſ. 7. 16. *return upon their own heads*, and their *violent dealings come down upon their own pates.*

Thirdly. When the Devices of wicked Men ſhall luckily meet with a diſappointment, juſt at that very time, when they are ripe and ready for execution, this is another very probable ſign of its being
Judit. 9. 11. from God. For he is *a God of the afflicted, an helper of the oppreſſed, an upholder of the weak, a Protector of the forlorn, a Saviour of ſuch as are without hope.* He can indeed, if he thinks fit, confound and baffle Mens devices, even in the very beginning of them: but he ſeems oftentimes to ſuffer them to thrive and proſper for a while, purely for this

this end, that he may daſh them, in the very critical moment, when they think themſelves infallibly ſecure of their enterprize: and by adminiſtring ſuch wiſe and ſeaſonable relief to his ſervants, take away from them even all pretences of aſcribing it to blind and undeſigning chance.

Fourthly. When good Men, at the very time of their Praying for their Enemies diſappointment, ſhall obtain their deſire; there can be no doubt then who it is that grants it. Thus when the Enemies of *Theodoſius* were diſappointed in their Deſigns of routing him intirely, by a Tempeſtuous Wind, which aroſe immediately, upon his ſupplicating God for Aid, and fought ſo ſtrongly againſt his Enemies, as to change the Face of the Day, and give him, who but juſt before was declining apace, at firſt an eminent Advantage, and at laſt a Compleat Victory over his Enemies: To what cauſe ſhall Socrat. *Scholaſt. Eccl. Hiſt. l.* 5. *cap. xxv.*

we aſcribe this Diſappointment? Shall we ſay, that Fortune heard his Prayer, and came to his Relief? alas! ſhe is deaf and cannot hear, or, if ſhe could, cannot haſten her pace one jot. Or ſhall we ſay, that ſhe luckily happen'd to come, without deſign, juſt as he was Praying, and ſo made her deliverance look like an Anſwer to his Prayers? this is highly improbable; but it is more than probable, that it came from him *who heareth prayer*, who *helpeth his ſervants when they cry unto him*, and can make even *Winds and Storms fulfil his Word.*

Pſal. 65. 2.
Pſ. 148. 8.

Fifthly. When a great number of unexpected accidents ſhall, as it were, conſpire to begin, carry on, and at laſt conſummate any notable diſappointment, as in the caſe of *Haman*, who was defeated in his purpoſes againſt *Mordecai* and the *Jews*, by many ſtrange and unaccountable accidents meeting together, as you may read in his Story; in ſuch a caſe there

Eſther, c. 5, 6, 7, 8.

there ſeems to be too much art and contrivance for Fortune to lay a Claim or Title to. She may indeed poſſibly, now and then, by the caſual concurrence of two or three happy accidents, get the praiſe of a lucky hit; but, that ſhe ſhould bring any long train of accidents together, which ſhall all ſerve to promote and farther the ſame end, is very hard to be believ'd by us, who know her variableneſs and uncertainty. And to whom then can ſuch diſappointments as theſe be attributed? To whom, but him, who has the Management and Superintendency of all Accidents, and therefore can Connect and Range them together in ſuch an uſeful order, that, for a conſiderable time together, they ſhall all, without interruption, be ſubordinate and helpful to each other.

But I forbear being too particular, leaſt I ſhould be tedious.

Laſtly

Laſtly then, let it ſuffice to obſerve, once for all, that, when-ever there are any extraordinary inſtances of Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, viſible in the diſappointments of Wicked Mens Deſigns, they ought then to be look'd upon, as God's ſpecial doing. For where ſhall we expect to ſee God, if not there, where his Attributes appear in a more than ordinary Luſtre and Brightneſs, and do, as it were, call us to him? Where ſhall we acknowledge his ſpecial and immediate preſence, if not there, where we cannot, without a manifeſt contempt of his honour, deny it?

When therefore any Plot or Deſign, that has been laid with all the Art and Contrivance of Human Policy, and fortify'd with all the Power of Human Strength, ſo that it ſeems to Men Infallible, and abſolutely uncapable of being defeated, ſhall, after all, miſcarry, and come to nothing; then are we in reaſon bound to ſay, Behold he that is *Mighty in ſtrength*

ſtrength and Wiſedom hath done this, yea, the Arm of him, to *whom Power belong-eth*, and the Counſel of him, who *is Un-derſtanding*, hath brought it to paſs. Job 36. 5. Pſal. 67. 11. Prov. 8. 14.

And to the ſame Authour ought we to aſcribe thoſe diſappointments, by which any very ſignal and eminent good is obtain'd; as the *releif of the oppreſſed*, the *helping them to right that ſuffer wrong*, the preſervation of the publick Peace of a Nation, the ſaving a whole Kingdom from ruine and the like. Theſe are great and noble ends, worthy the care and Providence of God, and moreover ſuch as, he himſelf has aſſur'd us, he delights to farther and promote. And therefore there can be no doubt, but that, when diſappointments evidently tend to ſuch ends as theſe, God has more then a little ſhare in the management and ordering of them.

But there are three caſes more eſpecially, in which we ſhould be very careful to give God the glory of the diſappointment

ment of wicked Mens devices, and thoſe are, when they are levell'd againſt his Church, his Anointed, and his peculiar People. He has ſo frequently, both in words and actions, declar'd himſelf to be in an eſpecial and extraordinary manner, the Protector and Guardian of theſe, that we cannot without Impiety ſuppoſe any weapon form'd againſt them ſhould be made unproſperous, without his particular direction; we cannot without a kind of Sacrilege, aſcribe the good that befalls theſe, to any other cauſe, than that Providence, which is always watching over them for their Good.

Theſe are all the ſignes, that I can at preſent think off, whereby we may know the diſappointments of crafty Mens Devices to be from God. And, by the help of theſe, I hope I ſhall find it an eaſie matter,

Secondly. To make you ſenſible how eminently God's hand appear'd in thoſe Delive-

Deliverances of this Nation, from the Devices of crafty Men, which we this day Commemorate. Deliverances I ſay, for they are double; our Ears have been pleas'd with the Story of the one, and our Eyes bleſs'd with the Sight of the other, and even at this day we feel and enjoy the happy effects of both. Happy effects indeed! even our Laws, our Liberties, our Properties, our Lives, and, what is ſtill abundantly dearer to us, than all theſe, our Religion.

If we look back to the days of old, what a glorious and ſurprizing ſcene of Providence may we there view. Have not our Fathers told us, what, a crafty race of Men, crafty even in the worſt of ſenſes, conſpir'd at once both againſt them and God: againſt God's People, againſt God's Anointed, againſt God's Religion; againſt their Lives and Fortunes, againſt their Prince and Government, againſt their way of Worſhip and Salvation? Have they not told us, how cunningly

and how ſecretly their enemies hid their Plot in the dark caverns of the Earth, how ſucceſsfully they throve in it, for a long time,and how near they brought it to execution;how little,in the mean while they themſelves dreamt of their danger, and how unable they were to prevent it? Have they not told us all this? Yes, and, to our comfort, a great deal more: They have told us, how their God, in whom they truſted, came ſuddenly and ſeaſonably to their relief: what a wonderful and unexpected accident he ſent, not many days before that on which they were deſtin'd for ſlaughter, to inform them of the danger they were in,and to warn them to provide againſt it: How wiſely and how powerfully he defeated all the Deep-laid and Infallible Contrivances, as they then no doubt thought them,who had the Bleſſings of Infallibility upon them,of his and their Enemies: How juſtly he retorted the miſcheifs, they had deſign'd for his People, upon their own heads: and

How

How gloriouſly he preſerv'd his Truth and his Anointed from becoming a prey to Idolatrous and Blood-thirſty Men, and ſuffered not his Heritage to be brought to confuſion. And, from theſe remarkable circumſtances of their deliverance, they have wiſely and piouſly infer'd, that it was the Lord's doing, and Religiouſly devoted this day to his Service, as an argument not only of their ſenſe of his goodneſs, but alſo of their thankfulneſs for it.

But we need not go ſo far backwards, to behold God ſtretching out his Arm for our deliverance. We may all remember, and certainly we ſhall never forget it! how very lately the wicked off-ſpring of the ſame race of crafty Men, whom I mention'd before (whoſe cuſtom it is to obſerve our *Saviour*'s commands by halves, and to put on the *cunning of the Serpent*, without the *Innocency of the Dove*,) were induſtriouſly contriving our ruine. Not ſo ſecretly indeed as the others, but no leſs dangerouſly, becauſe their openneſs had Power and

Authority to ſupport it. Nay, ſo far had they prevail'd in their deſigns, that they had more than began to prophane and defile *God's Sanctuary*, more than began to *pillage and oppreſs his People*. But I love not to repeat ſuch Melancholy Truths; It is enough to ſay our caſe was bad, and, as we then thought, deſperate; but he, whoſe *Iſa.* 55. 8. *thoughts are not as our thoughts*, did not think ſo; and happy was it for us that he did not. He ſaw and had compaſſion on our tears, ſaw in what need we ſtood of a Deliverer, and he immediately became one to us. And that we might, even from the beginning of our Deliverance, know it to be from him, he began it, with an *Happy Omen*, on this very Day, on which he had done ſuch *wonderful things for our Fore-fathers* in times paſt. Nor did it want other marks of being his: It was commenc'd, carry'd on and perfected in *Wonders*, his Enemies courage forſaking them, unaccountable fears laying hold on them, and *Pſ.* 107. 27. making them to *ſtagger like drunken Men*,

and

and to be at their wits end: It came in Judgment to make his enemies feel thoſe evils which they had not only threatn'd, but in part executed againſt others: It came in ſeaſon, when they began to *Lord it over his heritage*, with an high hand: It came to anſwer the earneſt cries and importunities of his Servants: It came attended with a mighty concurrence of lucky accidents, and, in a word, it came with ſuch extraordinary *power, wiſdom and goodneſs, to pull down the ſtrong holds of the wicked*, to turn all their craft into fooliſhneſs, and to preſerve and ſecure the true Religion, and the true ſervants of it, that we have no Room to doubt, from whence it came.

Oh! Bleſſed Day, which God himſelf has marked with *double Characters of Joy!* We may now vie with our Fore-fathers, for inſtances of the *Divine favour and Protection*, and hope that we are not worſe, than they were, becauſe we have not far'd worſe. It is indeed a marvellous Love, wherewith God has loved us. Oh let us

ſtudy

ſtudy how we may repay it, in acts of Duty and Obedience. But this advice will more properly belong to my

III. *Third* Head, under which I now come to make ſome *practical inferences* from the whole. And, Is it then manifeſt that the great, and wiſe, and good *God*, who beholds and over-rules all the *moſt ſecret Counſels of the crafty*, has, in a moſt illuſtrious manner, twice even on the ſame day, defeated and confounded all the promiſing and hopeful *devices* of our enemies againſt us? Methinks the conſideration of this ſhould,

1. Diſcourage them from attempting us any more. When they ſee the *Providence* of God ſo zealouſly engag'd on our behalf, it is not greater *wickedneſs*, than it is *folly*, to fight againſt it; for there is no *wiſdom*, nor *underſtanding*, nor *counſel*, I may ſafely add, nor *power* againſt the Lord. They can never prevail againſt us without his leave: and he has hitherto given them but very ſmall ground to hope that they ſhall obtain it; So far has he been from *ſhining*

Prov. 21. 30.

upon

upon their Counſels, that he has *ſhow'd his diſpleaſure and diſlike of them*, in repeated *diſappointments*, thereby plainly forbidding them to *tempt him* any more.

The *Ægyptians*, when they perſu'd the *Iſraelites* to the *Red Sea*, and ſaw the hand of God divide it, to make a paſſage for them, argu'd very wiſely, in ſaying, *Let us flee from the face of Iſrael, for the Lord fighteth for them againſt the Ægyptians.* And certainly, were not *our enemies* more hardned than the *Ægygptians*, they would argue in like manner, and ſay of us; Behold the *Keeper of Iſrael, who neither ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth*, watcheth over *this People* for their *Defence*, and therefore it is in vain to hope that any deſign, which we can *Form* againſt them, ſhall proſper. *Exod.* 14. 25.

I am ſure, had they *Argu'd* thus ſome years ago, they had ſav'd themſelves a great deal of *ſhame* and *trouble*; but, as the wiſe Providence of God has order'd it, which knows how to *bring good out of evil*, it is well for us, that they did not. For their

their frequent Diſappointments of late, and eſpecially that laſt *Signal one*, which is freſh upon ours, and, I dare ſay, upon their *Minds* too, are ſuch new and evident Teſtimonies of the *Divine Love* and *Care* over us, as muſt certainly Damp their Spirits, and abate the Heat of their Deſigns againſt us.

2. This Conſideration ſhould encourage us, in all our *ſtraits* and *difficulties*, to place our hope and confidence in God; In God, I ſay, who hath already given us ſuch glorious and happy taſts and earneſts, not only of his Ability, but alſo of his readineſs and willingneſs to help us. What, tho' our caſe, to Human ſight, ſeem dark and melancholy, tho' our enemies lay cloſe ſiege to us, and their devices, appear to be contriv'd with ſo much art and cunning, and ſupported with ſo much ſtrength and power, that they can hardly poſſibly fail of ſucceſs; Muſt we Deſpair becauſe of this, Why ſo? Ought we not rather to Argue thus with our ſelves? Were we never

never before in as bad a caſe? Were we never reduc'd to ſuch *ſtraits* before? And who then *deliver'd us* out of them? Who indeed but he whoſe *arm* is ſtill as long as ever, whoſe *power* and *will* to ſave is ſtill the ſame. Let us not *fear then*, neither *be diſmay'd*, but in our *greateſt dangers* ſtill confide in him that hath *redeem'd* us, and ſay, as *David* did upon a like occaſion, *The Lord that deliver'd our Fore-fathers from the* Gunpowder *Plot, and our ſelves from another, that would as certainly, tho' not ſo ſuddenly, have prov'd fatal to us, ſhall deliver us likewiſe from the ſnares now laid for us.* To him then let us *commit our cauſe*, Let us *hope in his mercy, and his eye will be upon us*, let us *truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.*

1 *Sam.* 17. 37.

Pſal. 33. 18.

Pſal. 37. 5.

3. It ſhould likewiſe encourage us to make our earneſt Prayers to God for *help* in time of *need.* There is no motive, which can ſo powerfully engage Men to *ſeek unto God*, as a firm beleif that they ſhall obtain what they ſeek for, that they ſhall *ask and have.* And this we have abundant reaſon to believe concerning our ſelves, from

thole many favourable and gracious Anſwers which God hath given to our prayers hitherto. *From the end of the earth,* ſaith *David* unto God, *will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelm'd: for thou haſt been a ſhelter for me, and a ſtrong Tower from the enemy.* God has been a *ſhelter* to us likewiſe, therefore let us *cry unto him in the time of trouble.* More eſpecially at this time, when the devices of our enemies are many, and their ſtrength great againſt us, let us intreat him to be our deliverer. *Keep not thou ſilence O God, hold not thy peace, and be not ſtill O God. For lo thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lift up the head. They have taken crafty counſel againſt thy people, and conſulted againſt thy hidden ones. They have ſaid, come, and let us cut them off from being a Nation: that the name of Iſrael may be no more in remembrance.* But, *O Lord, Remember thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindneſſes which have been ever of old: and give not thy Scepter unto them that be nothing, and let them not laugh at our fall, but turn their devices upon themſelves, and*

Pſal. 61. 2, 3.

Pſal. 83. v. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Pſal. 25. 6.

Eſther 14. 11.

and make him an example that hath begun this againſt us.

4. And laſtly, Since God hath done ſuch wonderful things for us, we muſt be ſure not to forget to glorifie him. This, he has plainly told us, he expects from us: *I will deliver thee*, ſaith he, *and thou ſhalt Glorifie me.* *Pſal.* 50. 15.

Glorifie him, by acknowledging his Salvation, by confeſſing *that our own arm did not ſave us, but his right hand, and his arm, and the light of his countenance, becauſe he had a favour unto us.* *Pſal.* 44. 3.

Glorifie him, by rejoycing in it: We will *rejoyce in his Salvation*, becauſe *the Heathen are ſunk down in the pit that they made, in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.* *Pſal.* 9. 14. 15.

Glorifie him by *declaring his works, by telling the people of his doings, by ſpeaking of the glory of his Kingdom, and talking of his power; by making known to the ſons of Men his mighty acts, and the glorious Majeſty of his Kingdom.* *Pſ.* 45. 11, 12.

Glorifie him, *by having his praiſe continually in our mouths, by declaring his name unto our brethren, by praiſing him* eſpecially *in the midſt of the great congregation, and by publiſhing all his wondrous works with the voice of thankſgiving.* But, above all, Glori[fie]

Pſ. 26. 7.

Glorifie him, by our *lives and converſations*, by behaving our ſelves as becometh thoſe, whom the *Lord hath redeem'd, and deliver'd from the hand of the enemy.* This, this is that *ſacrifice with which God is well pleaſed:* for *behold to obey and to do juſtice is better and more acceptable to him than ſacrifice.*

1 Sam. 15. 23.

Prov. 21. 3.

Let this then be our way of Glorifying God: Let us be careful not only to *honour him with our lips*, but alſo to *order our Converſation aright*, that ſo we may both praiſe him worthily for paſt Deliverances, and engage him to *ſhew us his ſalvation* in the times to come. If we do this we may ſafely defie all the ſtrength and cunning of our enemies, and apply thoſe words of God to them, which he ſpake by the mouth of his Holy Prophet *Iſaiah*, Ch. 8. *v.* 9, 10. *Aſſociate your ſelves, O ye people, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces: and give ear all ye of far Countreys: Gird your ſelves, and ye ſhall be broken to pieces: Gird your ſelves, and ye ſhall be broken to pieces. Take counſel together and it ſhall come to naught. Speak the word, and it ſhall not ſtand, for* God is with us.

THE END.

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